

Use and Limitations of Policy Approaches to Tobacco Control: The Example of the Retail Environment

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The retail tobacco store is the tobacco industry's major communication channel with present and future customers, with more than 88 percent of advertising and promotion dollars being spent in ways that change the retail environment. In our observations of a nationally representative sample of retail stores, we found a mean number of branded industry items per store (exclusive of the product itself) to have increased from 12.6 (± 10.4) in summer of 2001 to 17.4 (± 13.4) in summer of 2002. Industry influence effects how "tobacco friendly" the retail environment is and how exposed children and others are to unavoidable pro-tobacco messages. Industry promotions vary by neighborhood characteristics, such as proportion of African-American residents and median household income, as do cigarette prices. This presentation will discuss policy options to help clean up the store environment, such as general signage laws, land use provisions, and minimum pricing laws. The limitations of policy approaches and alternative approaches also will be discussed.